



**Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission
U.S. Congress**

**Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen
November 17, 2016**

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Amnesty International USA welcomes this opportunity to address the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission on the important subject of the crisis in Yemen.

Since the conflict began, Amnesty International researchers have conducted multiple research missions in Yemen. Our researchers have directly documented human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes, by the Saudi Arabia-led military coalition and the Huthi armed group. Our latest research mission just concluded earlier this week, and we will be publicizing our findings in the days ahead.

Human Rights Violations: The Saudi-led Coalition

All parties to the conflict have committed violations, though it is worth noting that only Saudi Arabia and its coalition have the military capability for aerial bombardment or air-to-ground strikes. The Saudi Arabia-led coalition's pattern of attacks across Yemen raises serious concerns about an apparent disregard for civilian life. This is reflected in a failure to take feasible precautions to spare civilians, as required by international humanitarian law.

For example, the Saudi Arabia-led coalition declared the entire Yemeni city of Sa'da a military target, in direct violation of international humanitarian law. When Amnesty International visited in early July 2015, we found that hundreds of airstrikes had destroyed or damaged beyond repair scores of homes, several markets, the entire main shopping street, and virtually every public building.

The United Nations has reported that Saudi Arabia-led coalition airstrikes in Yemen were responsible for most of the civilian deaths through the end of July 2015. The U.N. has reported that between March 2015 and August 23, 2016, an estimated 3,799 civilians were killed and

6,711 injured as a result of the war. The U.N. further reports that over 2 million people are currently suffering from malnutrition, and over three million people have been forced to flee their homes. Yemen is clearly facing a humanitarian crisis.

Human Rights Violations: The Huthi Armed Group

The Huthi armed group and forces allied to it, including army forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, have also committed numerous violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law. These violations and abuses have included:

- Endangering civilians by deploying in densely populated neighborhoods, including launching attacks from or near populated homes, schools and hospitals.
- Firing weapons indiscriminately into civilian populated areas in Yemen and southern Saudi Arabia.
- Using explosive weapons with wide-area effect such as ground-launched artillery shells and mortar projectiles in populated areas, killing and maiming scores of civilians.
- Laying internationally banned antipersonnel landmines that have killed and maimed dozens of civilians.
- Arbitrarily detaining and forcibly disappearing scores of people in governorates under their control, including political opponents, human rights defenders and journalists, as well as members of the Bahá'í community.
- Raiding and closing dozens of non-governmental organizations as part of a wider campaign against activists, human rights defenders and political opposition groups.

U.S. Arms Sales and Risk of Complicity

Clearly, all parties to the conflict have committed human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law. However, it is worth noting that the humanitarian crisis has been impacted dramatically by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition's reckless bombardment of civilian communities.

Despite the Government of Saudi Arabia's record, the Obama Administration has persisted in selling it billions of dollars in arms. As a consequence, the Obama Administration risks U.S. complicity in the Saudi Arabia-led coalition's serious violations of international humanitarian law in Yemen, including war crimes.

Amnesty International researchers who visited sites bombed by the Saudi Arabia-led coalition found both unexploded U.S. bombs and identifiable fragments of exploded U.S. bombs among

the ruins of Yemeni homes and other civilian objects. Amnesty International has reviewed photographs of bomb fragments, including a bomb fin, found onsite by locals who live next to and witnessed the bombing of the Doctors Without Borders / Médecins Sans Frontières hospital in northwestern Yemen on August 15. Based on two experts' analysis, Amnesty International has identified the bomb used in this attack as a Paveway-series bomb of U.S. manufacture.

Amnesty International remains deeply concerned by the Obama administration's ongoing major arms sales to Saudi Arabia and its allies. On November 16, 2015, the administration announced a \$1.29 billion arms sale to the Government of Saudi Arabia that consisted of bombs, related parts, and logistical support. More recently, the administration announced a \$1.15 billion sale of tanks, military vehicles, and related equipment and services also to the Government of Saudi Arabia.

The Obama Administration's recent arms sales to Saudi Arabia contradict the guidelines of Presidential Policy Directive PPD-27 on United States Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, dated January 15, 2014. The directive states that all arms transfer will take into account the "likelihood that the recipient would use the arms to commit human rights abuses or serious violations of international humanitarian law." Saudi Arabia has already used U.S.-designed or produced weapons in its attacks on civilian communities in Yemen.

Recommendations for the U.S. Government:

Amnesty International urges the U.S. government to take the following steps to address Yemen's human rights crisis:

- End all arms sales and arms transfers to Saudi Arabia and members of the Saudi Arabia led coalition that could be used in the conflict in Yemen.
- Support a comprehensive embargo on arms transfers that could be used by any party to the conflict in Yemen while there remains a substantial risk the arms would be used to commit or facilitate war crimes or other serious violations.
- Support an international, independent investigation into civilian deaths and injuries in Yemen. The investigation should address alleged serious violations and abuses of international human rights and humanitarian law committed by all parties to the conflict in Yemen. The investigation should establish the facts, collect and preserve information related to violations and abuses with a view to ensuring that those responsible for crimes are brought to justice in fair trials.